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Deposited in DRO:

24 June 2011

Version of attached file:

Published Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Skeates, R. (2007) 'Book review of 'Prehistoric figurines : representation and corporeality in the Neolithic' by Dougless W. Bailey, Abingdon New York : Routledge, 2005.', *Antiquity*, 81 (313). pp. 801-802.

Further information on publisher's website:

<http://antiquity.ac.uk/ant/081/ant0810801.htm>

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Australia, Scandinavia, Britain, America, the Arabian Gulf, Ireland and Ecuador, and ranging from the Mesolithic to contemporary times. A number of arguments regarding identity are developed across the collection. These include its multiplicity, the processes through which it is negotiated, its mutability, and what Russell refers to as its 'undecidability', which are, inevitably, explored through gender (Voss, Fowler, Brück, Russell and Schmidt), class (Russell, Brück and Casella), sexuality (Voss), ethnicity (Jamieson, Insoll), age (Fowler, Brück) and religion (Insoll). The first part of the volume develops a debate regarding the ways in which identity is often actively and explicitly constructed and expressed as part of wider cultural, social or political projects. These projects may be relatively 'safe' as in the case of O'Keefe's discussion of "Fethard Castle" in southern Ireland, or they may take on a more politically volatile edge, as demonstrated by Russell in her exploration of pre-Colonial Kangaroo Island, Australia. In both cases, however, a range of identities are being constructed, used and expressed as integral tools within observable conflicts over authenticity and historical accuracy.

In the second part of the volume, Voss and Schmidt advance these arguments in their respective identifications of how present-day dichotomies relating to sex/gender have been naturalised and used to negotiate and explain how identities were constructed in the past. While this argument is not particularly new, both authors do extend previous debates through their detailed and carefully-considered case studies. An important issue subtly underpinning much of the volume is that of power, which is explicitly and openly tackled by Brück (see also Insoll). She, like Russell and O'Keefe, examines the consequences of identity work, both in terms of the present and our interpretations of the past. For Brück, by not problematising the experiences of ourselves in the present, a certain amount of familiarity is naturalised and 'read' into the past. This, she uses as a warning to argue for a loosening up of our need to answer the 'undecidable'.

In the final part of the volume, the idea of identity as a performance (Casella and Jones), or something that is worked at and embodied, continues to be developed. Likewise, Insoll and Jamieson, in their examinations of the Arabian Gulf and colonial Ecuador respectively, continue to encourage an awareness of the recursive and powerful relationship between past and present as a structuring element in the construction and

interpretation of identities. Jamieson, in particular, draws our attention to the ways in which identities are hierarchical, often utilised by cultural elites to persuade others to accept and acquiesce to their domination and political legitimacy.

While there is a tendency in some of the papers towards oversimplification (which at times skates a little too close to rehearsing essentialist notions of identity) the challenge implicit within the contributions of O'Keefe, Russell, Voss, Brück and Insoll makes this volume an important contribution to archaeological debates on identity. It reminds us that the question of 'identity' is far from redundant within archaeological enquiry, not simply because it is central to social life, but also because there are still so many unacknowledged, ideological assumptions hidden and maintained within our interpretations. I recommend this book to anyone interested in the thorny issue of identity.

Reference

BENWELL, B. & E. STOKOE. 2006. *Discourse and Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

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DOUGLASS W. BAILEY. *Prehistoric Figurines: Representation and Corporeality in the Neolithic*. xx+244 pages, 69 illustrations. 2005. Abingdon & New York: Routledge; 0-415-33151-X hardback; 0-415-33152-8 paperback £25.99.

Whatever you know about prehistoric figurines, this book will open your eyes and make you think. It can

be judged with reference to its two core aims.

The first is to cut loose from conventional archaeological debate about the interpretation of figurines and the people who used them, by understanding figurines as dynamic elements of visual and sensual culture. Figurines, Bailey argues, would have been looked at, held and thought through, particularly as potent, miniature and three-dimensional, representations of the human body (and of other



figurines) that evoked strong emotional responses

in both the prehistoric past and the present: stimulating and empowering, but also seducing and overwhelming, the senses and thoughts of the people who experienced them, and with socio-political consequences for their sense of identity. Bailey achieves this goal impressively as a result of some truly exhaustive thinking about figurines and the significance of visual representations of the human body. In particular, he explores a wide range of concepts and examples derived from visual culture studies, studies which characteristically emphasise the complex politics of visual representation and spectatorship. But Bailey's achievement here is not so much in introducing and developing a variety of theoretical concepts, about miniaturism and dimensionality for example, but in demonstrating their relevance to archaeologists through a series of stimulating questions and discussions that provoke us to think about how we understand and shape our own bodies, and how people did so in the Balkan Neolithic by using anthropomorphic figurines. And Bailey helps the reader all the way, with a meticulously constructed text, written in an absorbing style; it combines some closely observed descriptions of the forms of figurines with comprehensive syntheses of their archaeological contexts, critical reviews of previous studies and interpretations, accessible explanations of complex ideas about human representation, and a selection of photographs and line drawings that work actively alongside the text (but also lead one to expect more). If only Bailey's style were not marred by denouncements of the work of most of his colleagues, which appear to serve no other purpose than to aggrandise his own approach.

The other central aim of the book is to do justice to the archaeological material: the figurines of Neolithic South-East Europe. Bailey also makes significant progress here, particularly in seeking to understand what Neolithic people might have thought about the figurines and themselves. He steadfastly and persuasively, if rather frustratingly, refuses to offer specific interpretations of the figurines' representations or functions, arguing that these are inaccessible, due to the limitations of all archaeological data, and also irrelevant, since figurines have no exact meaning or function. Instead, he offers the more general, but useful, conclusion that figurines, as 'tools for thinking', contributed to a process in the Balkan Neolithic in which people asked questions about their bodies and identities and about those of others. However, Bailey can be

accused of over-politicising this process, as a result of adhering so closely to the party-line of contemporary visual culture studies, and, despite acknowledging the fantastic and other-worldly dimensions of the figurines, by dismissing previous interpretations that have emphasised their spiritual potency and religious significance. Bailey also falters on the question of why the proliferate figurine phenomenon is so tightly restricted to the Neolithic period in South-East Europe. He argues that figurines played a key role in a particular politics of corporeality, identity, community and individuality that *was* the Balkan Neolithic: saturating communities with shared '*material explanations of how it was to be different and how it was to be the same*' (p. 200), and thus contributing to a significant degree of coherence across Balkan Neolithic communities. This answer seems both incomplete and inevitable, given Bailey's assertion that '*there is more similarity than there is variation across groups of figurines*' (p. 199), combined with his outspoken refusal to engage in '*discourse on culture-historical similarities among figurines from neighbouring or distant sites*' (p. 2); this impression is reinforced by his consideration of only three regional figurine traditions, his limited treatment of zoomorphic figurines, his rejection of quantitative analysis, his ultimate dismissal of detailed contextual analysis, and his focus on the consumption of the figurines as finished products at the expense of a full consideration, or physical analysis, of their manufacturing sequences, wear traces, post-breakage biographies and regular replacement. As a consequence, Bailey concludes by over-generalising, homogenising and de-contextualising the figurines in the present, and, by extension, in their past.

Nevertheless, this is an outstanding book, because it poses so many thought-provoking questions about the complex qualities of visual representations of human bodies in the past and their significance today.

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UK (Email: Robin.Skeates@durham.ac.uk)

KULTU ASLIHAN YENER (ed.). *The Amuq Valley Regional Projects, Volume 1: Surveys in the Plain of Antioch and Orontes Delta, Turkey, 1995-2002* (Oriental Institute Publications 131). xlii+304 pages, 143 illustrations, 8 plates, 5 tables. 2005. Chicago (IL): Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; 1-885923-32-5 hardback £40.